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Like incandescent light bulbs, compact fluorescent bulbs are available in different colors of light. CFLs use about 75 percent less energy than a standard incandescent bulb and last up to 10 times longer.

Switching bulbs just one of several energy-saving ideas

Sunday, October 7, 2007

BY MATT HUTTON

THE REGISTER-MAIL

If "The Graduate" was set today, the famous line might have gone something like this "I want to say one word to you.... Fluorescents."

Compact fluorescent light bulbs are growing in popularity, and with good reason. Lighting accounts for about 10 percent of the average electric bill, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. CFLs use about 75 percent less energy than standard incandescent bulbs and last up to 10 times longer.

"I've had people come in and bring a list of the number of lamps and go right through and buy 30 fluorescents - and they're going to save money," said Don Gillenwater, president of Galesburg Electric Lighting. Though prices vary, a typical CFL will cost \$3 to \$4, compared to about 75 cents for a incandescent. "To save energy, you have to spend money. But the payback is so great."

For example, replacing a typical 100-watt incandescent light bulb with a 26-watt CFL would save \$59 per year.

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"It's just better technology," Gillenwater said.

According to the Home Energy Saver project sponsored by the DOE, energy bills for the average Galesburg home adds up to \$1,615 per year. Bills for an "energy efficient home" in the city cost about \$970 per year. The DOE factors heating, cooling, water heating, lighting and most appliances into the figures.



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Galesburg Electric/Industrial Supply Co. Inc. President Don Gillenwater talks about the advantages of compact fluorescent lights Monday in his South Henderson Street store.

Replacing incandescent lights with CFLs is one of the easiest areas home owners can target for savings, said Galesburg Electric Lighting owner Craig Johnson. Most commercial and public entities, such as government agencies, hospitals and colleges have already made the switch, as have about a quarter of residential customers.

As the CFLs become more popular, several things are happening. First, the CFL bulbs are being made to fit in more places, such as dimmers, three-way lamps and outdoor flood lights - the bulbs now work at temperatures as low as 10 degrees below zero. In addition, the spiral bulbs are now being placed inside more traditional and decorative shapes, such as reflector style lights and candelabras to provide "improved aesthetics with energy savings." In addition, the prices are beginning to drop.

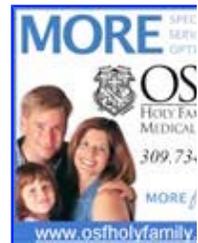
Another area Gillenwater said the CFLs have made huge strides is color rendition.

"They do tend to get much, much whiter light than incandescent," Gillenwater said, adding some people do not find it as nice because it distorts things or does not have the same warm feel as the traditional incandescent light. But improvements have been made to try and offer "warmer" shades of light that will more closely match what many people are used to.

While lighting might be the easiest place to find energy savings, heating costs represent the largest opportunity for savings, according to the DOE.

Pete Logan, owner of Service Pro in Galesburg, said one of the biggest pieces of common sense advice he offers is "Cleanliness is next to godliness. That holds true with anything mechanical."

Cleaning appliances such as dryer vents,



refrigerator coils and furnace filters are the easiest ways to avoid service calls and improve safety and efficiency. Now also is the right time to turn the furnace on, even if it's not for very long.

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"During the summer, every now and then walk over to the furnace and turn it on to make sure everything is working fine and cycle everything out," Logan said. If there is a problem, better to know it early so the service companies can get to the home before they get too busy.

For those who want to examine their homes for drafts, Logan suggests taking advantage of the vast resources of the Internet, starting with www.eere.energy.gov.

"Most of it is a basic, no-brainer situation. You look at cost savings ... It's like finding a dollar on the ground. You wouldn't walk by it, you'd pick it up," Logan said. "If they just take a couple hours and just walk around their house, they would find it very easy to accomplish."

The Web site offers common places to check for leaks, such as outlets, window frames and baseboards, and suggestions for installing weather stripping and other preventative measures.

Insulation is another area that can be a big energy saver, with the home owner generally recouping his or her cost in about a year. Home owners should be sure to check the floor joints where the lumber sits on top of the foundation, he said, calling it "a quick and easy place for heat loss."

However, Logan said most people will consult with someone before having insulation installed.

"Most people think they have a lot, but they only have 6 inches," he said.

Logan's last piece of advice is for those home owners thinking about making their homes more energy efficient to try and do so before the end of the year, when a federal tax credit expires. For more information on the tax credit or CFLs visit www.energystar.gov.



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